

Statement of Senator John F. Kerry  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation  
Hearing on Climate Change, Technology and Policy  
July 10, 2001

I want to thank Chairman Hollings and Ranking Member McCain for holding this hearing. To begin, I'd like to put this hearing into context. Today's hearing focuses on the technologies and policies that can help us mitigate the threat of climate change. While we will focus some on the science and while the underlying science remains an important concern of this Committee, today marks a significant shift in our focus from the science to the solutions of climate change.

Over the past year, Senator McCain – as chairman of this committee – held a series of hearings that included some of the top scientists in the world. Not surprisingly, the record of those hearings parallels the findings of the National Academy's of Sciences report released in June on the science of climate change. That report – which follows on the heels of similar findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report and dozens of other individual studies – concluded that greenhouse gases are accumulating in the Earth's atmosphere as a result of human activities; that air and ocean temperatures to are rising and are expected to rise further; and that human activities, mainly burning fossil fuels and deforestation, are a contributing factor.

This Committee is by no means ignoring the science of climate change – the science is what is driving this Committee's agenda in regard to climate change – and that is why, after four hearings that together create a compelling argument for action, we are now investigating the technologies and policies that can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is an important step, and I'm glad to see the Committee take it.

Second, I want the record to show that the Department of State and the White House were invited to testify before the Committee today but declined to do so. I wrote both Secretary Powell and Chief of Staff Card late last week when I heard that the Administration had decided against testifying in hopes that they would reconsider. Obviously, they did not. While I'm pleased to have Dr. Evans, a respected career scientist from NOAA here to represent the Department of Commerce, I regret that senior officials from the State Department, Commerce Department, and the White House are not here today.

I want to be clear that while I have differences with Administration's approach to this issue, I am not here to assail the Bush Administration. Today was a chance for the Administration to set forth its approach to climate change, which is not an unreasonable request. The Administration has told us that it has committed significant resources at the highest levels of government to assessing climate change – National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice has described this effort as so intense as to be unprecedented. The Commerce Committee has demonstrated a commitment to understanding the science of climate change over past several years. The Committee has jurisdiction over several laws and programs important to the issue – ranging from basic scientific research to auto efficiency standards

to technological research, development and deployment. It seems to me that the Administration might have welcomed the opportunity to come before the Committee and discuss the policies that it believes this nation should enact. It seems to me that today is lost opportunity for the Administration.

Lastly, today's hearing will bring forth some of the technologies and policies that, I believe, make climate change not an intractable problem, but a challenge to be understood and addressed, and, as importantly, an economic opportunity. To address climate change, America and the world must move from polluting technologies to sustainable technologies. I don't propose that we immediately stop burning coal, oil and natural gas to address climate change or other environmental issues. Instead, I advocate a gradual transition from heavily-polluting energy to clean energy at a pace that is technologically viable and economically beneficial. I advocate that we do this in the most efficient, least cost manner and that we address the real world economic realities associated with any technological shift. Today, we are moving far too slowly with almost no recognition of the environmental implications of our pollution and with no purpose to incite the necessary technological innovation. Some of these technologies are already in the marketplace and the challenge is to increase their use – they include cogeneration, wind power, solar, methane, biomass, hydrogen fuel cells and more efficient cars and appliances. Others are technologically proven but have yet to gain a commercial foothold. And still others remain on the drawing board, and while they have tremendous potential, that potential can only be achieved if we pursue them with the same kind intensity and investment we have placed in space exploration, communications and medicine. I believe that the burden is on us to create the push and pull of incentives and mandates that will move these technologies into the marketplace for the benefit of our economy and our environment.

Thank you.